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ABSTRACT

This booklet is a product of the Dan O'Brien Education Program, which was created in 1993 by the Educational Resources Information Center Clearinghouse on Educational Management. The program was designed to help young people gain the most from their education. It outlines five lessons for setting and achieving goals: (1) window of opportunity; (2) the value of a goal; (3) Dan's great goal guidelines; (4) writing goals; and (5) looking back. The lessons start by defining goals and how to set them. Additional lessons identify important short- and long-term goals and conclude with goal-setting exercises. Students are asked to set goals in three areas: physical fitness, academics, and citizenship/community. These can be short-or long-term goals; however, at least one short-term goal is recommended so that students can feel a sense of accomplishment. Each lesson is divided into five or more components. These include: purpose; materials/preparation; new information/activity; closure, which includes questions to stimulate action; extensions, which encourage students to recognize their achievements; and optional activities, such as organizing goal check-in groups and creating a group collage. Inspirational stories and a list of resources available from the Dan O'Brien Education Program are included. (RJM)

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The Dan O'Brien GOAL-SETTING PROGRAM

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Go for the Goal

The Dan O'Brien Goal-Setting Program

A Goal-Setting Program for Grades 3 to 6

by Patricia and Stephen Stolp

Published by the Dan O'Brien Education Program, 1999
ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management
University of Oregon
In cooperation with the Dan O'Brien Youth Foundation
Moscow, Idaho

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ABOUT THE DAN O'BRIEN EDUCATION PROGRAM

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management created the Dan O'Brien Education Program in 1993 to inspire young people to gain the most from their education. The program highlights the achievements of Dan O'Brien, who overcame hardships to win the gold medal in the decathlon at the 1996 Olympic Games.

The program has produced a poster for display in classrooms with the message "Keep your mind on track! Work hard in school!" Students who write to Dan O'Brien receive trading cards and other motivational materials.

For teachers and administrators, a series of reports called *Portraits of Success* highlight the work of educators who are dedicated to the success of the nation's school children.

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THE DAN O'BRIEN
Education Program

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Go for the GOAL

The Dan O'Brien GOAL-SETTING PROGRAM

PREFACE

At one time or another, almost everyone has looked up into a clear, star-strewn sky and made a wish. Some of those wishes are purely fanciful. But others are things we would really like to see fulfilled in our lives.

Much like the stars, however, our secret wishes and desires frequently fade with the light of day. And they will remain as out of reach as the stars themselves unless we begin taking tangible steps to move toward them.

Dan O'Brien knew at a young age that he wanted to compete in the Olympics. Perhaps he even wished on a star for his dream to come true. But if he did so, he didn't stop there. Even though some may have considered his goal far fetched, he kept his "eye on the prize" and started taking steps to achieve smaller short-term goals that would move him closer to his ultimate Olympic goal.

As additional motivation, he began scrawling his goals on a piece of paper that he carried around in his pocket. Today what may have once been considered Dan's "fantasy" has become reality, for in 1996 Dan not only competed in the Olympics but won the gold medal in the decathlon.

The Go for the Goal goal-setting curriculum is a tool teachers can use to engage students in a goal-setting process that can serve them well throughout their lives.

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INTRODUCTION

A Goal-Setting Program for Elementary and Middle Grades

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

Success starts with knowing where you want to go, and goal-setting provides a tangible strategy for getting there. These are the basic tenets of Go for the Goal, Dan O'Brien's goal-setting program.

Dan has set goals in both his athletic and personal life. He credits much of his success to the goal-setting strategies he learned in school. Dan carries a small card with him that outlines important goals he intends to achieve.

Goal-setting is a powerful life skill. This curriculum program introduces students to the basic elements of effective goal-setting, and then it engages students in goal-setting exercises.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

The curriculum features five goal-setting lesson plans. The lessons start with teaching students what goals are and how to set them. Additional lessons identify important short- and long-term goals and conclude with actual goal-setting exercises.

Goal-setting cards are included. Students are asked to set goals in three areas–physical fitness, academics, and citizenship/community. These can be short- or long-term goals; however, at least one short-term goal is recommended so that students can feel a sense of accomplishment.

Progress is monitored by the students themselves and by a teacher and/or parents. If students achieve goals, parents or teachers provide verification, although the primary emphasis of this program is not on achieving all the identified goals but rather on learning the goal-setting process and personally reflecting on the process.

After students have participated in the goal-setting process, they are asked to write one or two para-

graphs on what they have learned. Teachers may then copy these student reports and send them to the Dan O'Brien Education Program, which will add the students' names to the program's website. Portions of students' writing may also be posted on the website.

THREE LEVELS

Program materials include red, silver, and gold stars for students to put on their goal-setting cards as they advance through the program.

Bronze Level–Once students understand the concept of goal-setting (as assessed by the teacher), they receive a red star for their goal-setting card.

Silver Level–Once students have set three goals in the areas of physical fitness, academics, and citizenship, they receive a silver star for their goal-setting card.

Gold Level–Once students have written a paper about the goal-setting process and what they have learned, they receive a gold star, and their names are added to the list of goal-setters on the Dan O'Brien Education Program website.

LENGTH OF PROGRAM

Teachers have a lot of flexibility in deciding how long to run the goal-setting program. Most teachers will want to implement the curriculum over two to three weeks, but it could be spread over a longer period.

LESSON ONE
Window of Opportunity

PURPOSE

To look back at past successes and think ahead to future dreams and wishes.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION

- One sheet of paper for each student (8½" x 11")
- Pens or pencils
- Write on board:
  —The lesson's purpose
  —This quote: "If we know how to set and achieve goals, we can make many of our wishes come true."
  —A list of goal areas, such as: Family, work, sports, relationships, friends, good grades, homework, improved behavior, activities (leadership, chess, drama, computers), college, scholarship.

NEW INFORMATION/ACTIVITY

STEP ONE: Point to the quote you wrote on the board. Ask the students what they think it means. After a little discussion, explain that we all have wishes. If we know how to set and work toward goals, we can often transform our wishes into reality.

STEP TWO: Ask students to fold their sheets of paper into fourths. Have students hold up the folded paper and look at it as a window. Talk about what windows are for and what a window on the future might allow them to see. ("What might you see if you looked into a window on future world events? What might you see in your city or town? What might you see in your family? What might you see about yourself?")

STEP THREE: Direct students first to think about and then write their thoughts about the following questions in each of the four frame/window spaces. The questions pertain to the goal areas you have written on the board.

"If we know how to set and work toward goals, we can often transform our wishes into reality."

1. Accomplishments/Goals Already Attained

• What were you successful at this past summer (job responsibility at home, activity)?

• Last school year did you accomplish anything you are proud of (good grades, leadership roles, athletics, tutoring, homework, new friends, improved behavior)?

2. Three Years from Now

• What are some goals you would like to accomplish before leaving middle school (sports, work, grades, family, relationships, friends)?

3. Six to Nine Years from Now

• What would you like to accomplish in high school (academics, sports, activities–leadership, chess, drama, computers)?

• What are some goals you would like to accomplish after high school (college, scholarship, job)?

4. Twenty Years from Now

• Can you think that far? What might you be doing?

• What are some goals you hope to accomplish in the next twenty years (house, family, car, job, volunteering)?

Have students do some sharing as you guide and monitor their participation.

STEP FOUR: Give students a chance to share their thoughts. First, have students identify (by circling or putting stars next to the items on their "windows") four things they'd feel comfortable sharing with others. Next, allow students to pair up with a partner of their choice. Give these dyads time to share four things from their "windows." Finally, if time allows, put them into groups of four to share just one item with each other.

CLOSURE

Questions to stimulate action:

• How can thinking and talking with others about your wishes help you in the future?

• What are you doing right now to help yourself achieve one of your dreams?

Students will need these "windows" for a future lesson. You can collect and check the material or just have students keep it.

EXTENSIONS

"Gold Medal Accomplishments." If students are enthusiastic about their past accomplishments, have them create a gold medal from construction paper that explains one significant past accomplishment. For example, "Read 100 books," "Passed my times tests," "Climbed Mount St. Helens with my uncle," "Played quarterback/pitcher." Hang these accomplishment statements around the room.

LESSON TWO — *The Value of a Goal*

PURPOSE

1. To understand how setting goals helps people become successful.
2. To understand the program.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION

- Go for the Goal Program brochure (supplied)
- Write on board:
  —The lesson's purpose
  —This quote: "People who have specific written goals accomplish [?] times more than those who have goals but don't write them down." – Borba *

INTRODUCTION

Open a class discussion by pointing to the quote you wrote on the blackboard. The answer, which is 50 to 100, was omitted to stimulate conversation.

Have students write their guesses on pieces of paper. Then have them share their guesses. Students usually significantly underestimate the figure, so it has a lot of impact when you reveal the number is 50 to 100!

Next have students explain why they think the statement is true.

NEW INFORMATION/ACTIVITY

1. Tell students about several people they can relate to who set goals. Examples are provided on page 15 (Lesson 2, Attachment 1) for you to share.

2. Explain to students that the Go for the Goal Program will help them to set goals and work toward them to achieve "Gold Medal Accomplishments."

"People who have specific written goals accomplish 50 to 100 times more than those who have goals but don't write them down."

– Borba

*Borba, Michele M. *Esteem Builders*. Rolling Hills Estates, CA: Jalmar Press, 1989.

(Cite some of the accomplishments they listed in their windows.)

3. Distribute the Go for the Goal Program brochure and read through it with students.

CLOSURE

Instruct the students to share this handout with their families or someone else they admire, and come prepared tomorrow to set goals in each of the three areas. Encourage them to find an adult who is willing to support and motivate them about this program and their goals.

A statement of support, to be signed by the adult, can be sent home along with the letter that describes the program.

LESSON TWO

The Value of a Goal

LESSON THREE

Dan's Great Goal Guidelines

PURPOSE

To identify the four qualities of a good goal.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION

- Handout 1: Qualities of a Good Goal (Reproduce a copy for each student.)
- Overhead of Handout 1 or butcher paper and colored markers
- Write the lesson's purpose on the board.

"A good goal can be measured along the way."

INTRODUCTION

Begin the lesson by following up on Lesson 2. Ask students to think of people (such as parents, older friends, or coaches) who can support them in achieving their goals. Ask how many students have at least one goal in mind already.

LESSON IDEAS

Option 1. Using overhead or butcher paper and colored markers, make a checklist as you identify and explain each of the four elements of good goal-setting.

Option 2. Make an overhead transparency of Handout 1 and fill it out as you lecture. Students can have their own copy to fill in along with you.

NEW INFORMATION/ACTIVITY

The act of setting goals can increase motivation and productivity. These guidelines will help you and your students effectively set goals. A good goal is specific, measurable, challenging, and time-limited.

1. Specific. Goals like "I'll try my best" are too general and don't tend to help people improve or change.

Individuals with specific goals outperform people who are "trying to do their best" or "do better." Steer students away from setting a goal like "do better in math" or "read more."

2. Measurable. A good goal can be measured along the way. We all need feedback about how well we are doing.

If Dan's goal was to run 400 meters in 1:16, he wouldn't wait to time himself on race day, but would check his progress toward that goal on a weekly basis.

3. Challenging. A good goal is not too easy but also not so hard that it's unattainable. Research shows it is best to set high goals. Students who set harder goals and partially achieve them will be better off.

For all levels, respond in such a way to allow students to maintain ownership over the goal, but keep it realistic. Most kids know themselves well and can set appropriately challenging goals.

4. Time Specific. A good goal has a set time limit attached to it. Long-term goals such as "I want to go to the Olympics" should be broken down into attainable short-term goals such as "I want to run the 100 meters in 15 seconds before the last track meet."

To help students remember these four qualities of great goals, here are three suggested activities:

Option 1. Discuss a few goals as examples and have the whole class or small groups evaluate each goal based on the four elements of effective goals.

Option 2. Have students get in groups of four. Each group must write the qualities of a goal on Handout 2 (if they haven't already). Make each person responsible for a specific portion of the worksheet.

Option 3. Direct students to partner up and quiz each other on the four qualities of a good goal. Next, give a quick quiz using the blank overhead transparency.

LESSON THREE

Dan's Great Goal Guidelines

LESSON FOUR *Writing Goals*

PURPOSE

To have students select and write down their individual goals.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION

- "Windows"
- Handout 2: Goal Worksheet (Reproduce a copy for each student.)
- Goal Card (Supplied)
- Handout 3: Goal Check-in Sheet (Optional; reproduce a copy for each student.)
- Write on board:
  —The lesson's purpose
  —This quote from Dan O'Brien: "Our young people have to make a commitment early in life and set goals."

"Our young people have to make a commitment early in life and set goals."

—Dan O'Brien

NEW INFORMATION/ACTIVITY

STEP ONE: Have students use their "windows" to help them think of future goals.

STEP TWO: Remind students of the four qualities of a good goal:

1. Be specific. Press students to be as specific as possible by asking questions like this: What will you do to "do better in math"? Will you do your homework every night? Have your brother give you a flash-card test on times tables three times a week? Double check your homework every night before you turn it in?

2. Make sure you can measure your progress. If students want to set a goal of doing twenty-five situps without stopping, or running a mile in less than six minutes by next month, ask them how they will check to see how they are progressing. Keep asking for specifics! Will they pair up with someone and time each other or run the mile together once a week?

With academic goals students may say, "I'll get an A in math on my report card." How will they know after one week how they are doing? Will they find a time to check with the teacher on scores? Will they write down all their scores and figure out their ongoing standing in the class?

3. Challenge yourself. Finding the right degree of challenge can be tricky, so encourage students to aim high, but to be realistic. For example, a slow reader may set a goal like "Read ten books this month." On the other hand, a gifted student may say, "I'll get all A's."

4. Set a time limit. For the student who wants to write down something like "I want to play for the NBA," respond by encouraging them to set a time-specific goal like "I will shoot twenty-five free throws in a row by next month" or "I'll run and practice my dribbling skills every day."

STEP THREE: Direct students to write three goals on their Goal Worksheets (Handout 2).

STEP FOUR: Collect the goal worksheets and individually check the spelling and grammar of each goal for each student. (Schedule this step to take place during a time the students are occupied with recess, lunch, or another activity.)

STEP FIVE: Return the worksheets to the students so they can transfer their goals to their goal cards.

CLOSURE

Give students an opportunity to share their written goals. Then ask students these closure questions:

- How will setting these goals help you in the future?
- Which goal will take the greatest effort from you?
- Who can support you in your efforts?
- How can we support each other as we work toward these goals?

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Even with all the preparation, setting appropriate goals and working to achieve them can be difficult for students. Depending on how involved teachers want to get in the process, here are some ideas that have been used with some success.

- **Goal Check-in Groups.** Put students in predetermined groups of no more than four. The groups should be made up of students with varying abilities, levels of motivation, and social skills. Each group could have a file containing the goal sheets for each group member. Provide your class with a brief time each week for the groups to meet and do a goal "check-in." Everyone in the group could restate their goals and quickly explain how they are doing. You'll need to decide how much structure to provide. You can use the Goal Check-In Sheet (Handout 3).
- **Group Collage.** Have students use markers and construction paper to write down one or more of their goals and create a group collage on a bulletin board or wall that shows what everyone is working toward.
- **Ongoing Goal Check-in.** Have an informal goal check-in as time allows. Ask students to share how they are doing on their goals. With a positive classroom environment, this can be very affirming for all students if success is met with some type of peer approval (applause? high fives?).

LESSON FIVE
Looking Back

PURPOSE

To allow students to reflect on their goal-setting experience through discussion and writing.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION

- Paper and pen for students
- Write this quote on board: "Remember that overnight success usually takes about fifteen years."
- Write lesson's purpose on board: "To reflect on our goal-setting experience."

INTRODUCTION

Begin by asking what the quote on the blackboard has to do with achievement: "Remember that overnight success usually takes about fifteen years" (H. Jackson Brown, Jr.).

NEW INFORMATION/ACTIVITY

• Remind students that one of the most important life skills that successful people have and use is self-reflection. If you experience failure, the ability to reflect and analyze why you failed will help you in life. The same is true for success. Thinking back on what made you successful and how you can continue to improve upon that positive action will help you achieve even more.

• Use the following guiding questions to lead students in class discussion, partner conference, or individual prewriting exercise (or a combination of all three).

"Remember that overnight success usually takes about fifteen years."

– H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. As you review your three goals, which one(s) do you feel you made the most progress toward? Why? Was it the easiest goal you set? The hardest? The one you put the most effort into?

2. What did you do to help yourself accomplish your goals(s)? Be specific. Did you get someone to coach you? Did you spend extra time studying? Explain your efforts.

3. Was there anyone who really supported your efforts to be successful?

4. Is there a goal that was too challenging to accomplish? If so, why were you unable to complete it in the time you've had? Are you still working on it? Have you adjusted it in any way or gotten help? What are you planning to do in the near future to still achieve success?

5. Is there a goal that you feel was too easy? If so, how could you adjust the goal to aim higher and really challenge yourself? Did you know it would be so easy when you originally set it? Explain.

6. Go back and look at your original "window on the future." Did the goals you accomplished help get you any closer to where you want to be in the future? Why or why not? What are some ideas you have for future goals you'll set?

7. How did this program, lessons, and class time affect your efforts? Did the three "medals" help motivate you? Why or why not?

8. After completing this program, what would you tell other kids about it? What would you like to ask or tell Dan O'Brien about success?

WRITE AN ESSAY

Direct students to write a paragraph or two explaining their thoughts, including the information gathered from guiding questions 1 through 5. Encourage them to be specific. Remind them that their names will be listed on the Dan O'Brien Education Program website. Portions of the students' essays may also be posted on the website.

OPTIONAL:

In addition, have students write a paragraph explaining their reactions to guiding questions 6 through 8.

EXTENSION

Have a medal ceremony.

LESSON FIVE

Looking Back

GOAL SUCCESS:
Inspirational Stories

Chasing a Dream

The first time Whitney Larsen saw a production of the Nutcracker she knew she wanted to dance in the ballet. "The ballerinas were so enticing and I wanted to be them so bad," said Whitney. "I announced that night that I was going to dance up on that stage."

With daily practice and ten hours of ballet lessons a week, Whitney reached her goal. She has now performed in nine productions of the Nutcracker. Whitney's determination and love of ballet helped her reach her goal. "I saw those girls in the pointy shoes and flashy costumes," said Whitney, "and now I am one of them."

Overcoming Misfortune

Annette Lee refused to let any obstacles keep her from reaching her goal. She wanted to study chemical engineering at a major eastern university, a goal that requires not only outstanding grades but an excellent extracurricular record as well. This is a tall order for any high school student to fill, and for Annette it may have seemed impossible.

Annette, unlike most other high school students, lives on her own, pays rent, holds a part-time job, and provides virtually all of her own necessities. Her parents divorced when she was nine, and her father was killed in a traffic accident when she was in her early teens. An unhappy relationship with her mother led Annette to move out on her own to a room-and-board situation with a local family.

Many students in her place may have given up on a dream of attending college and dropped out of school altogether, but not Annette. Instead she doubled her efforts in school, refusing to be overwhelmed by the unfortunate things that had happened to her. To attain her goal, she began to build a scholastic and extracurricular record that would help her earn college scholarships. She became Elmira High School's student body president, an honor student, an athlete, and a community volunteer. She studied hard and attained a 3.95 grade-point average. Annette balances all this with her personal life and is well on her way to attaining her goal.

Instead of dwelling on the negative, Annette has focused on the positive things in her life and worked hard to reach her goal. Said Annette, "I think these things have happened for a purpose. They've made me stronger."

Changing Directions

John Mitchell made his living as a carpenter before he was involved in an autombile accident that left him paralyzed from the chest down. Since he could no longer work in the carpentry industry, he made a new goal; if he couldn't build homes, he'd design them. He enrolled in Lane Community College's technical drafting program and began to work toward his goal.

Instead of letting his accident hold him back, John used this unfortunate experience to set a new course to conquer the challenge of a new goal.

These stories were adapted from articles that appeared in *The Register Guard*, Eugene, Oregon.

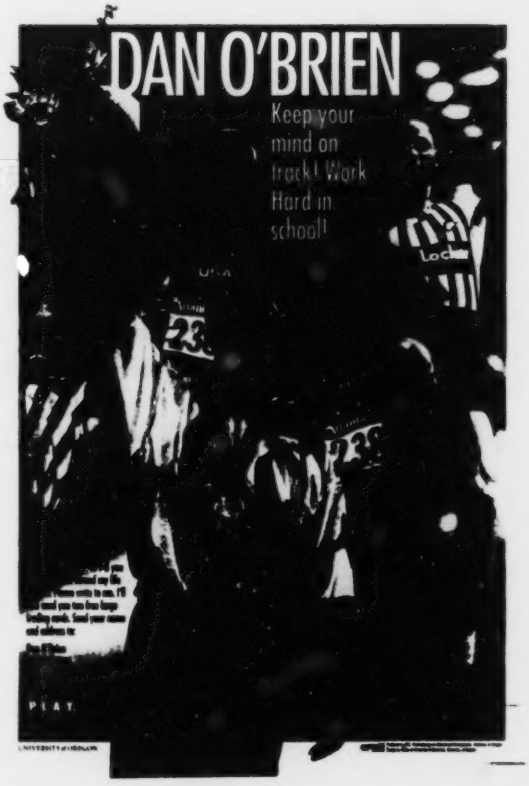
RESOURCES —

Resources Available from the Dan O'Brien Education Program

POSTER

Dan O'Brien Poster
1998 • 19 x 26 ½ inches • full color • $3.00
(includes S&H)

Poster Wins Award
Winner of a Distinguished Achievement Award from the Educational Press Association of America



The poster encourages elementary- and middle-school-age students to make a commitment to their education.

The materials highlight the achievements of Dan O'Brien, who has overcome hardships to hold the world record in the decathlon. Dan espouses the values of hard work, goal-setting, and self-discipline.

The poster communicates the motivational message "Keep your mind on track! Work hard in school!" Text at the bottom of the poster encourages students to write to Dan, in care of the Clearinghouse. (Teachers may incorporate this letter-writing activity in the language arts curriculum.)

Students who write to Dan receive a letter, biography, and two large Dan O'Brien trading cards.

In addition to providing sports-related statistics on Dan, the materials highlight the value of an education. For example, one card lists the average lifetime earnings of people who attain different levels of schooling. The average lifetime earnings of a dropout are $368,820, a high school graduate $564,300, and a college graduate $994,140.

PORTRAITS OF SUCCESS

Portraits of Success is a resource for educators who participate in the Dan O'Brien Education Program.

What Works in Schools: Form and Reform for the 21st Century
June 1996 (vol.1, no. 1) • 8 pages • saddle bind • $3.00 (includes S&H). Reports on the work of Siegfried Engelmann, Joanne Johnson, Bruce Joyce, and others who show that change and success are possible.

Motivating Today's Students: The Same Old Stuff Just Doesn't Work
November 1996 (vol. 1, no. 2) • 8 pages • saddle bind • $3.00 (includes S&H). An elementary school principal, an elementary school teacher, and a high school teacher tell how they keep students engaged and motivated.

WEBSITE

Visit the Dan O'Brien Education Program's Website for information about the poster program, Decathlon Challenge Clinic, and Dan O'Brien's life and athletic accomplishments. You can also obtain the full text of issues in the *Portraits of Success* series.
http://danobrien.uoregon.edu

RESOURCES

Resources Available from the Dan O'Brien Education Program

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